

Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission March 2008 Report

INTRODUCTION TO OIE GUIDELINES FOR THE WELFARE OF LIVE AQUATIC ANIMALS FARMED FISH

Article X.X.X.1.

Guiding principles for aquatic animal welfare

Considering that:

1. That there is a critical relationship between *aquatic animal* health and *aquatic animal* welfare. The use of fish in harvest or capture fisheries, in research and for recreation (eg ornamental fish and aquaria) makes a major contribution to the wellbeing of people; and
2. That the use of *aquatic animals* in aquaculture, harvest or capture fisheries, research and for recreation (eg ornamentals and aquaria), makes a major contribution to the wellbeing of people. There is a critical relationship between fish health and fish welfare; and
3. That the use of *aquatic animals* carries with it an ethical responsibility to ensure the welfare of such animals to the greatest extent practicable. Improvements in farmed fish welfare can often improve productivity and hence lead to economic benefits.
4. That improvements in *aquatic animal* welfare can often improve productivity and hence lead to economic benefits.
5. That the internationally recognised 'five freedoms' (freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition; freedom from fear and distress; freedom from physical and thermal discomfort; freedom from pain, injury and disease; and freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour) provide valuable guidance in *aquatic animal* welfare.
6. That the scientific assessment of *aquatic animal* welfare involves both scientifically derived data and value-based assumptions which need to be considered together, and the process of making these assessments should be made as explicit as possible.
7. That equivalent outcomes based on performance criteria, rather than identical systems based on design criteria, be the basis for comparison of *aquatic animal* welfare standards and guidelines.

The OIE will develop guidelines for the welfare of farmed fish (excluding ornamental species) during transport, slaughter, and destruction for disease control purposes. In developing these, the following principles will apply:

1. The use of fish carries with it an ethical responsibility to ensure the welfare of such animals to the greatest extent practicable.
2. The scientific assessment of fish welfare involves both scientifically derived data and value-based assumptions that need to be considered together, and the process of making these assessments should be made as explicit as possible.

Article X.X.X.2.

Scientific basis for guidelines

The scientific assessment of *aquatic animal* welfare has progressed rapidly in recent years and forms the basis of these guidelines. Many areas of *aquatic animal* welfare require further research to understand in full the ability of *aquatic animals* to feel pain and to be sentient. [To be developed]

1. The basic requirements for the welfare of farmed fish include handling methods appropriate to the biological characteristics of the fish and a suitable environment to fulfil their needs.
2. There are many species of fish in farming systems and these have different biological characteristics. It is not practicable to develop specific guidelines for each of these species. These OIE guidelines therefore address the welfare of farmed fish at a general level.

— text deleted